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ABSTRACT

This analytical report draws together findings from multiple sources that reflect current admission processes used by principal-preparation programs and explores their implications for initial educational-leadership development. The sources are a web-based review of state regulations for school-leadership credentials, a review of selected literature about reform of administrator-preparation programs, and findings from recent studies of admission standards. Following are some of the report's findings: (1) The prevailing practice for acceptance to leadership-preparation programs continues to use GRE scores, GPA, and letters of recommendation. (2) Candidates' career aspirations may play a significant role in the recruitment and selection of program participants and the identification of future principals. (3) Many viable candidates for preparation programs never apply because they question their own ability to lead. (4) Many entrants into educational-leadership positions do not feel fully prepared for the reality of the tasks required of them. (5) Careful recruitment and selection of candidates are cited often as necessary elements in the restructuring or reform of preparation programs. The results of this analysis will be used to develop a research design for an expanded study of the effectiveness of principal-preparation programs. (Contains 85 references.) (WFA)

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An Exploratory Analysis of Leadership Preparation Selection Criteria

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Abstract

This paper draws together findings from multiple sources that reflect current admission processes used by principal preparation programs and explores their implications for initial educational leadership development. The sources include (a) a Web-based review of state regulations for school leadership credentials, (b) a review of selected literature about reform of administrator preparation programs, and (c) findings from recent studies of admission standards. The results of this analysis will be used to develop a research design for an expanded study about the effectiveness of principal preparation programs.

An Exploratory Analysis of
Leadership Preparation Selection Criteria

Research on high performing schools shows a direct link to effective principal leadership (ERS, NAESP, & NASSP, 2000; National Commission for the Principalship, 1990). Current complexities of educational reform and paradigm shifts suggest that administrators of 21st century schools have broader expectations placed upon them than in the past (Calabrese, 2002; Colon, 1994; Elmore & Fuhrman, 2001; Marsh, 1997; Short & Greer, 1997). The expectations of recent educational reform demand that dramatic changes be made in the core technology of schools and in the leadership required for the resulting restructured schools (Murphy, 1992). Today's school principals need adeptness at addressing multiple—often confusing—issues that require appropriate responses to external change forces (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999) and simultaneous initiation and maintenance of internally driven renewal processes (Barth, 1990; Fullan, 1999; Schlechty, 1997, 2001). Despite daunting challenges, the outcomes of reform and renewal efforts must be classrooms, schools, and school districts where human energy "is transformed into desired student academic and social growth" (Grogan & Andrews, 2002, p. 234).

In response to the new demands on school administration, the principalship is being re-conceptualized (Murphy, 1998, 2002), changing from a traditional authoritarian, top-hierarchical position to dynamic leadership models or management tasks dependent upon contexts or challenges (CCSSO, 1996). The effective principal of today is one who can address a daily stream of diverse issues needing immediate attention, while concurrently creating school cultures and communities that optimize opportunities for learning (Uben, Hughes, & Norris, 2001). Conforming to this new vision of educational

leadership leaves many principals "feeling that they are being pulled in many different directions simultaneously" (Leithwood, 2001, p. 19).

A contemporary principal may be required at one moment to assume the role as facilitator of empowered school governance teams (Lambert, 1998; Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston, 1999) and at another moment as leader of a learning community (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Senge et al., 2000; Sergiovanni, 1994, 2001). Expanded school functions based upon changing student populations and learner needs create additional demands on the skills and expertise of school leaders (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Levine, Lowe, Peterson, & Tenorio, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1992). Novice principals often report difficulty in balancing technical and managerial tasks while also performing as visionary leaders who meet the expectations of superintendents and school board members (Daresh, 2002; Daresh & Playko, 1997). According to Ripley (1997), today's principals are "pulled in different directions and some are breaking under the stress" (p. 55), a fact not unnoticed by teachers and other educational practitioners who comprise the major supply of new entrants into school administration.

Filling vacant principalships is becoming problematic because the pool of qualified candidates willing to assume positions as school leaders grows smaller (ERS, 1998; McAdams, 1998; Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002). Trends indicate that filling open principalships will become more difficult in the next decade as retirement rates of experienced principals increase, high percentages of current principals move to non-administrative positions, and numbers of qualified applicants choosing to become school leaders decrease (ERS et al., 2000; Newton, 2001). Reasons for the shrinking pool of principal candidates are interrelated and confounding (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Usdan,

2002; Winter, Rinehart, & Munoz, 2001), but nonetheless connect to the "harsh realities of being school principals" (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2001, p. 1) in public schools today. Thus, replacement of exiting educational leaders requires concerted efforts to attract and select quality applicants to the field.

During the last decade of the 20th century, educational leadership associations and state committees developed professional standards for the preparation, certification, and performance of school leaders (CCSSO, 1996; Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998; NPBEA, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2001; Usdan, 2002). Changes in society, the economy, and educational policy now require principals skilled in facilitation, influence, and vision building toward achieving high-stakes accountability goals (Newton, 2001; Young & Petersen, 2002). The introduction of new professional standards for school leaders also required university-based programs to develop standards-based curricula and modify program delivery formats (Coleman, Copeland, & Adams, 2001; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Kelley & Peterson, 2000; Murphy 1993).

According to Milstein and Krueger (1997), redesigning professional development programs for school leaders in the midst of paradigm shifts is not easy—and often leads to confusion. Educational administrators who began their practices during an earlier era often recruit candidates that fit profiles of the traditional principal (Cline & Necochea, 1997; Grogan & Andrews, 2002), rather than profiles of the emerging contemporary principal (Kowalski, 2003; Skrla, Erlandson, & Wilson, 2001). And, although many leadership preparation programs have been redesigned and expanded (Kelley & Peterson, 2000; Milstein & Krueger, 1997; Peterson, 2002), research about the effectiveness of program redesigns is limited (Murphy, 1993).

In the wake of demands for school reform and teacher quality and growing attention on the qualifications of school administrators (Murphy, 1992), leadership educators and scholars initiated a call for self-assessment of pre-service training (Glasman, Cibulka, & Ashby, 2002; McCarthy, 2001). Graduate schools of education enjoyed a monopoly in the preparation and certification of educational leaders for more than a half-century (McCarthy, 1999; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987). However, forces are not only challenging that monopoly (Grogan & Andrews, 2002), but also the need for state regulation of principal licensure (Kanstroom & Finn, 1999) and the value added by completion of preparation programs (Haller, Brent, & McNamara, 1997). Many states have enacted or are exploring alternative routes to school administrator certification, in tandem with alternative routes to teacher certification, as a means to fill real or projected vacancies. The multiple challenges to traditional university-based principal preparation cannot be countered without empirical evidence that leadership studies lead to effective school leadership (Muth & Barnett, 2001; Young et al., 2002).

Led by Bob Kottkamp of Hofstra University and Margaret Terry Orr of Teacher College at Columbia University during special sessions at the 2001 UCEA and 2002 AERA annual meetings, groups of leadership educators and scholars brainstormed the need for and pitfalls of conducting a large-scale, multi institution comparative study of current leadership preparation practices. These collaborations led to the formation of an ad hoc workgroup and four theme-based groups committed to laying the foundation for designing and conducting a national study. The four themes for proposed investigation include (a) student characteristics, (b) program features, (c) leadership skill development, and (d) impact measures (Orr, 2002).

This paper draws together findings from multiple sources that reflect current admission standards and selection criteria to principal preparation programs and explores their implications in the initial phase of educational leadership development. The sources include (a) a Web-based review of current state regulations for administrator credentials, (b) a review of selected literature about reform of preparation programs, and (c) findings from recent studies of admission practices. The results of this analysis will be used to develop a pilot study that ultimately will be integrated into a national study about the effectiveness of principal preparation programs.

Controlling the Profession: Administrator Licensure

State licensure mandates represent the "most profound government influence on leadership preparation" (McCarthy, 1999) and those who enter the principalship. Control of administrator credentials is predicated on the notation that "only well-prepared and qualified individuals are provided licenses to lead" (Young et al., 2002, p. 153). The adoption of standards for school leaders and accreditation for leadership programs by nearly 40 states forced university-based programs to revise content and deliver instruction beyond traditional classroom settings (CCSSO, 1996; Murphy, 1999; Young et al., 2002). In most cases, approved university program completion requirements link directly to state licensure or certification requirements.

A recent review of Web sites maintained by agencies that regulate credentialing of K-12 school personnel indicates that one reason for the diminishing pool of principal candidates may well be the number of poorly constructed Web sites! Information about regulations remains uncertain for five states, despite electronic mail requests for clarification. Hence, the findings presented here are inconclusive, yet intriguing.

Approximately two-thirds of the states require (a) issuance of an administrator credential, (b) completion of an approved preparation program and graduate degree, or (c) evidence of two to five years of full-time teaching experience or work in schools. Some states require all three conditions be met, while others only one or two in various combinations. Applicants for administrator licenses or certifications in some states must hold valid teaching credentials (sometimes for the same state that issues the administrator credential), attain a qualifying score on a specified professional examination, or complete monitored pre-service clinical practicums or internships. An intriguing finding—in light of the reform emphasis on instructional leadership and learning accountability—is that 11 states do not require applicants to document any teaching experience to become licensed or certified as school principals.

At least 31 states require successful completion of a state-approved administrator preparation program, and some of those states post specific content or standards to be covered. Additionally, several have links to related sites that announce policy changes for credentialing or information about school districts. A few Web sites specifically mention the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards as the guiding force in credential requirements.

Over the past two decades "business and political influentialists" (Usdan, 2002, p. 303) have played key roles in stimulating and expanding the standards-and-accountability reform movement. The strength of non-educational leaders in determining entrance into the practice of school administration is evident through changes in state licensure requirements, linked to standards developed by some individuals far removed from the realities of K-12 schools. Usdan (2002) asserts that the "field of educational leadership

preparation desperately needs to be transformed as expeditiously as possible" (p. 306), including attention to the critical issue of student quality.

Improving Leadership Preparation: Recruitment and Selection

The recent call to improve educational leadership preparation and practice began in response to the work by the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration published in 1987, and the 1989 report by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (Murphy, 1992). A flurry of responses by leadership educators and non-educators resulted. But despite these new calls for action to improve leadership preparation, Murphy posited in 1992 that "little progress has been made in resolving the deeply ingrained weaknesses that have plagued training systems for so long" (p. 79).

In particular, the recruitment and selection processes for entry into university programs remain "informal, haphazard, and casual" (Murphy, 1992, p. 80), with the most prevalent practice being candidate self-selection. The American Association of School Administrators (1960) cited the practice of using "*admission* rather than *selection* procedures" (p. 83) as damaging to the field of educational leadership. The only criteria for entrance into an educational leadership program in the middle of the 20th century was a "B.A. and the cash to pay the tuition" (Tyack & Cummings, 1997, p. 60), a widespread practice continuing today. Despite evidence of some proactive efforts toward careful recruitment and selection of students (Crow & Glascock, 1995; Murphy, 1999; Pounder & Young, 1996), most program admission processes have changed little over the last five decades (Creighton & Jones, 2001), as the following review of research suggests.

Findings from UCEA-based Studies

The publication of *Leaders for America's Schools* (Griffiths, Stout, & Forsyth, 1988) is often highlighted as the impetus for recent innovations of preparation programs, particularly among University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) members. Several major changes were recommended, including the need to "recruit quality candidates who have the potential to become future leaders" and "encourage minorities and women to enter the field" (Milstein, 1992, p. 2). With support from the Danforth Foundation, UCEA launched a series of case studies that explored the dynamics of changing traditional preparation programs that are "deeply entranced" (p. 5) into experimental training models. Admission processes were included in these studies.

In his review of five programs, Milstein (1992) found that restructured programs made changes in the determination of who participated. All five institutions moved away from candidate self-selection and emphasis on academic potential (i.e., traditional approaches linked to quantitative measures) and modified selection processes to include district leader nominations based upon perceived leadership potential. Field leaders agreed to sponsor candidates and provide release time and other resources to assist the candidates in successfully completing the programs. Application documents often included essays on leadership and values, in addition to the traditional sources of academic potential.

As a result of his findings, Milstein (1992) outlined critical elements in the selection process that need changing. First, purposeful selection of candidates, with focus on leadership potential, needs to be a partnership activity involving school district leaders and university faculty members. Through purposeful selection, attention to

recruitment and support of minority candidates can be made. Second, admission processes need to move from an emphasis on selection based upon academic potential (e.g., scores on nationally normed test, grade point averages, letters of recommendation) to criteria establishing potential as leaders. Program selection criteria need revising to reflect the reality that

> the more important intent of preparation is to produce leaders, not scholars. Leaders are measured by their sense of purpose, ability to get others engaged with them as they translate purposes, manage the enterprise, and intervene when required to keep the system on target. These are qualities that are best measured by *past leadership behaviors*, and through clear communication of purposes, and demonstration of the *ability to respond adequately in situations that require leadership behaviors* [emphasis provided by author of report]. (p. 10)

The final selection strategy connects to placement following completion of the program, a responsibility commonly left to individual graduates. Milstein asserts that selecting quality candidates for reformed programs and preparing them to become school leaders is not enough, but instead, only the first two steps in assuring schools are led by effective principals. "Nomination and selection to participate in preparation programs is the first step toward controlling entrance to the profession. Effective preparation is the second step. Purposeful involvement in the placement process is the third step" (Milstein, 1992, p. 10). In other words, the quality of entering students and exiting graduates and their placements as school leaders are all important standards of measuring the success—and effectiveness—of principal preparation programs.

Restructuring of admission processes, however, appears to have occurred sparingly, based upon findings from an UCEA-initiated study of student selection practices used by its member institutions during 1991. The purpose of the investigation was to access current recruitment and selection practices and explore implemented

strategies aimed at attracting minorities and women to educational administration programs (Murphy, 1999). Forty of the then-50 UCEA member institutions participated. Based upon respondents' weighted answers, the criteria perceived to be most important for admission to leadership preparation programs were (a) Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores, (b) grade point averages (GPA), (c) letters of recommendation, (d) writing samples, and (e) performance during personal interviews.

In a more recent survey, Murphy (1999) found evidence of greater focus on purposeful recruitment to ensure diverse student bodies. Responses by chairpersons at 44 UCEA-member institutions indicated that approximately 25% claimed efforts of greater selectivity of students, particularly through raised standards on GRE scores and grade point averages. Writing samples, documentation of previous leadership experiences, and use of personal interviews were other strategies sometimes used in candidate selection (Murphy, 1999).

Findings from Nationwide Web-based Study

To expand and update the research base about selection criteria, Creighton and Jones (2001) explored student admission practices used by 450 leadership preparation programs. They reviewed each university's Web site to access graduate school admissions criteria and any requirements specific to educational administration programs. The sample included representative programs across all geographic regions within the United States. A purposeful sample (N=45) of universities was used to verify Web-based findings through communication with deans of graduate schools, department chairs, and other department personal.

Findings indicate that the prevailing practice for acceptance to leadership preparation programs continues to be use of (a) GRE scores, (b) GPA, and (c) letters of recommendation. Cut-off score standards or score-combination standards used in assessing the quality of applicants' GRE and GPA data, however, varied considerably from program to program. Based upon their findings and those of the Educational Testing Service, the researchers assert that special care in interpreting GRE scores is required especially for "students who may have had educational or cultural experiences somewhat different from those of the traditional majority" (Creighton & Jones, 2001, p. 14). Low performance on GRE individual subtests can result in barring admission to female and minority applicants.

An interesting finding by Creighton and Jones was that, although all 450 programs required that applicants had earned an undergraduate degree from an accredited university, "only 3% (15) required the degree to be in education or one strong in the liberal arts" (p. 10). Somewhat surprising is the finding that only 180 programs (40%) required applicants to hold a teaching credential or have K-12 teaching experience. Even more perplexing is the fact that 270 university-based programs (60%) allow students to complete a graduate degree in educational administration without first satisfying the minimum years of teaching experience required for state certification as an administrator.

Creighton and Jones believe this finding is alarming and posit that students with only a year or two teaching experience lack the "first-hand knowledge and understanding of the school setting, students, teachers, administrators, and instruction" (p. 24) to make sense of their learning. The practice of admitting applicants to principal preparation programs without sufficient teaching experience is a "disservice to the candidates

themselves . . . [and] a disservice to the teachers, students, and community members in the schools these aspiring principals will someday attempt to lead" (p. 24).

Further, allowing new teachers to complete administrator certification requirements early in their career results in excessive numbers of administrator-certified candidates who either remain in positions as classroom teachers or seek principalships several years after completing leadership preparation. Some states are addressing this problem by placing time limits between provisional certification upon completion of a graduate degree and professional certification upon placement as a school administrator. Additional research is needed to determine if "a relationship exists between effective school leadership and a limited amount of classroom teaching experience or other school-site experience" (Creighton & Jones, 2001, p. 25).

Findings from Leadership Educator Survey

Expanding upon previous research about student characteristics, Creighton and Shipman (2002) surveyed faculty and administrators of leadership preparation programs through listserv databases used by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) and UCEA. The purpose of the study was to access attitudinal data about student characteristics that were perceived to be indicators necessary for successful and lifelong learning. The researchers used the same constructs and indicators identified in a Delphi study conducted by Nadeau, Donald, Konrad, and Tremblay (1990, as cited in Creighton & Shipman, 2002).

The Likert-scale survey asked respondents to assess the importance of 20 indicators perceived to measure student quality within four major constructs: (a) general academic preparedness; (b) verbal and written communication skills; (c) ability to

analyze, synthesize, and think critically; and (d) commitment to learning. The five highest-scoring indicators (i.e., applies learning to real-life situations; can put things into context; defines the essence of a problem; conceives, plans, and executes goals; considers all sides of an argument and makes an independent judgment) are in the *ability to analyze, synthesize, and think critically* construct. Faculty ranked basic written and verbal communication skills, evidence of independent study and efforts beyond basic course requirements, and classroom teaching experience as the next five indicators of success in educational leadership preparation.

Eight of the nine least important indicators of student quality (i.e., letters of recommendation; degrees, diplomas, certificates; college transcripts; performance on GRE verbal; GPA; performance on GRE combined; performance on GRE analytical; performance on GRE quantitative) are in the *academic preparedness* construct. Yet these criteria—judged by leadership educators to be least indicative of student quality—are used extensively as admission standards for leadership preparation programs (Creighton & Shipman, 2001).

Findings from Other Studies

In a study involving 25 administrators who participated in one of five different programs, new entrants into educational leadership positions did not feel fully prepared for the reality of the tasks required in their jobs (Kraus & Cordeiro, 1995). The new assistant principals and principals found the workload, immediacy of issues, time demands, and politics of the job overwhelming at times. All 25 administrators, however, identified classroom teaching experience and previous leadership responsibility as extremely helpful in their new careers. Participants cited previous learning experiences

both inside and outside education as being instrumental in their preparation as school leaders: (a) committee and group work, (b) on-the-job administrative experience, and (c) life experiences. For some, mentoring and encouragement by administrators were important in their decision to become school leaders. The researchers recommend that program selection processes "value the varied experiences and non-traditional backgrounds of program applicants" (p. 25). Myriad experiences, such as community leadership, corporate work, and even single parenthood, provide broader vision and expanded perspectives that help school leaders initiate and sustain educational change (Kraus & Cordeiro, 1995).

Crow and Glascock (1995) examined the influence of role conceptualization on candidates' socialization into educational administration during a non-traditional principal preparation program aimed specifically at recruiting women and minorities. The recruitment and selection process included six rarely used strategies:

> (1) Nomination by superintendents with emphasis on identifying excellent teachers among women and minorities.
> (2) Rigorous application process requiring nominees to reflect on career history, experiences as a teacher/learner, and vision of leadership.
> (3) Reference letters from superintendent, principal, and peer along with documentation of work with adults and children
> (4) First-cut selection by advisory committee consisting of (college) faculty and board of education staff members.
> (5) Videotaped sessions with semifinalists in small groups to assess abilities to communicate, work co-operatively, influence group opinion, and facilitate group task completion.
> (6) Final selection by a panel of recognized experts unaffiliated with the college who viewed videotapes and read applications. (p. 27)

The rigorous selection process helped to create an *esprit de corps* perception within the cohort that inspired candidates' ability to effect important changes within schools. At the end of the program, however, the school system that partnered with the university faced a

severe budget crisis that resulted in personnel cutbacks. Only 9 of the 17 candidates received placements as school or district administrators (Crow & Glascock, 1995), and thus, the long-term results of the rigorous selection process are unknown.

Research suggests that candidates' career aspirations may play a significant role in the recruitment and selection of program participants and the identification of future principals. Several studies indicate important connections between career aspirations and career paths in educational administration (Begley, Campbell-Evans, & Brownridge, 1990; Browne-Ferrigno, 2002; Merrill & Pounder, 1999; Pavan, 1987; Whitcombe, 1979). The decision to seek state credentials to become a school administrator occurs at different career stages for women and men. Additionally, many viable candidates for preparation programs never apply because they question their ability to lead; thus, encouragement from others before and during program participation appears to increase placement rates as administrators after completion of pre-service training (Hamilton, Ross, Steinbach, & Leithwood, 1996).

Careful recruitment and selection of candidates are cited often as necessary elements in the restructuring or reform of preparation programs (Achilles, 1987; Barnett & Caffarella, 1992; Hill & Lynch, 1994; Murphy, 1993; Schmuck, 1992; Smith, 1990). Yet in light of recent national studies (Creighton & Jones, 2001; Creigthton & Shipman, 2002), selection procedures used by departments of educational administration remain unsystematic and unstructured (Pounder & Young, 1996), and maddeningly frustrating in light of the past decade-plus attention to reforming university-based administrator preparation programs.

Robust recruitment and selection processes are critically important because haphazard, laissez-faire approaches to student admission processes is destructive to the profession and the reputation of programs (Milstein & Krueger, 1997; Murphy, 1992). Recruiting quality candidates may require expanded use of distance learning, alternative certification, reciprocal certification and portable retirements, and greater collaboration with districts and state departments (Keedy & Achilles, 2001). Evaluating leadership potential of candidates requires alternative assessments (e.g., writing samples, interviews) and performance demonstrations (e.g., auditions, group decision making) in conjunction with higher standards on traditional admission criteria required by graduate schools (Creighton, 2001; Keedy & Achilles, 2001). Muth and Barnett (2001) warn that if accountability policies are enacted that measure the effectiveness of principal preparation programs based upon placement rates of graduates and their subsequent performance on the job as school leaders, then issues of candidate recruitment and selection become critical.

Developing Quality Leadership: Program Input-Output Issues

Effective administrator preparation requires not only quality programs based upon standards and proven practices, but also quality students who have the potential to become effective school leaders. The recruitment and selection of "capable and talented individuals to participate in leadership programs" (Playko & Daresh, 1992, p.21) is a critical first step in preparing future school leaders. Thus, the reconceptualization of administrator preparation programs requires reconceptualization of selection criteria that ensure graduates able to meet the challenges and complexities of leading 21st century schools.

Efforts to improve the effectiveness of leadership preparation programs begin by careful consideration of desired student outcomes and use of futurist perspectives to answer such questions as, What are the key identifiable traits of effective school leaders? What do graduates of today's leadership preparation programs need to know and be able to do as successful leaders of tomorrow's schools? What desired leadership skills can be developed through professional training? What previous experiences, personal attitudes and dispositions, and career aspirations—that cannot be developed through professional training but can be measured—link to desired leadership ability? Responses to questions like these form the framework for improved recruitment and selection strategies.

Because leadership preparation fundamentally is about transformation, i.e., a changed orientation from a teacher mindset to an administrator mindset (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2001; Crow & Glascock, 1995; White & Crow, 1993), the seeds of transformation need to be present. Personal purpose and vision—qualities that do not emerge from quantitative measures such as GRE scores or GPA—are critical influences in the transformative journey from classroom teacher to school administrator. Thus, alternative assessments that measure leadership potential, such as performance activities (Creighton, 2001), are needed, in tandem with required graduate school admission requirements, in the selection of candidates for administrator training.

At this writing, 40 states have adopted the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, the accompanying licensing assessments, or some correlation or variation of the two as the framework for the preparation, certification, and evaluation of principals. A careful analysis of the nearly 200 indicators within the six ISLLC Standards suggest four recurring themes (Hessel & Holloway, 2002, p. 21):

- A Vision of Success
- A Focus on Teaching and Learning
- An Involvement of all Stakeholders
- A Demonstration of Ethical Behavior

If visionary, instructional, collaborative, and ethical practices are hallmarks of the effective contemporary principal, then why not use these themes as the foundation for developing standards for admission to administrator preparation programs? Several strategies can be used in the selection process. Presentation of an education platform and a career-goal statement could measure an applicant's visioning skill, ethical stance, and writing ability. Previous experiences as an instructional or collaborative leader can be presented through resumes or vitae that highlight applicant's (a) participation on school or district committees that develop curriculum or examinations, select textbooks, conduct student transitioning activities from one school level to another, or create professional development activities; (b) membership in professional associations and attendance at their sponsored conferences; (c) commendations and awards for teaching and learning achievements; (d) publications of teacher inquiry or action research findings; (e) skills in using information technology; or (f) involvement in community activities or advocacy groups.

Group assessment activities and performance auditions (i.e., responses to in-box messages, role-played telephone conversations) for semi-finalists would provide evidence of candidates' skills in communication, analysis and problem solving, and collaboration. Thus, use of authentic assessments linked directly to administrator standards orient leadership preparation programs toward future practice and frame relevance of program participation toward a specific career objective—becoming an educational leader.

Reconceptualized admission requirements will require more time and energy in the selection of students for graduate programs in educational administration. Despite the costs in time and energy, attention must be focused now on changing admission practices for university-based programs in order to provide quality leadership candidates to the field of educational administrative practice.

What Next?

This analysis serves as the springboard for design of an attitudinal survey to gather perceptions of leadership educators about admission practices. A purposeful sample for the pilot study will be developed using the same seven regions created by Creighton and Jones (2001) in their study of selection criteria. Analysis of the data collected and methodology used in the pilot study will guide the development of a national study described earlier. Leadership professors and practitioners are invited to join in this effort to investigate strategies to invigorate recruitment and selection strategies toward a common goal: preparing quality candidates who have the knowledge, dispositions, and skills to be effective 21st century school leaders.

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